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February 23, 2022

The Honorable Michael Tadych
Director of VA Puget Sound Health Care System

Dear Director Tadych,

I am writing following the closure of the Chehalis/South Sound Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) to press the VA to take all steps necessary to ensure Lewis County-area veterans have convenient access to care.

Shortly after the VA announced that it would be closing the CBOC and shifting the center of care for Lewis County veterans to the new Olympia clinic, I urged you to develop a detailed plan to preserve access to care for all impacted individuals. With the closure of the Chehalis clinic, some veterans in the more rural portions of Lewis County have had their commute times extended by more than 40-60 minutes *each way*. In your August response you assured me your intention was to “provide exceptional care at a level above and beyond current services.” Part of that pledge was to activate weekly Mobile Medical Units for outreach to Chehalis. **To date, this has not happened.**

We have seen the substantial benefit that Mobile Medical Units can provide to veterans in remote and rural communities. Several years ago, I worked alongside veteran-care advocates in Pacific County to secure the deployment of the Mobile Medical Unit to Raymond. I have heard countless stories from individuals who have benefited from that resource since that time.

In the immediate term, the VA must live up to the promise it made in its August letter to deploy the Mobile Medical Unit to Lewis County.

Additionally, it is critical to understand the scope of the challenges Lewis County veterans face now that the CBOC has been shuttered. I request that the VA Puget Sound Health Care System provide answers to the following questions below:

- What are the current wait times for an appointment for all health care services at the new Olympia clinic?
- What are the current wait times for veterans who are referred to Community Care Providers?
- What were the previous wait times for an appointment for all health care services at the CBOC?

- How many veterans who reside in my district have received care at the new Olympia facility?
- How many veterans who reside in my district have been connected to and received care from a Community Care provider?

Based on feedback I've received from veterans living in Lewis County, access to care continues to be a serious challenge. The situation necessitates not only the stopgap response of deploying the Mobile Medical Unit as promised, but also conducting a serious analysis of the requested data to formulate a sufficient long-term solution.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress